

GET THE FACTS

ABOUT EATING DISORDERS

(Source: National Eating Disorders Association, www.nationaleatingdisorders.org)

The Basics

- ◆ Eating disorders are physical and emotional problems that are centered around food and weight issues, but often have roots and contributing factors that are far more complex.
- ◆ It is estimated that in the United States, 5-10 million girls and women and 1 million boys and men suffer from an eating disorder or borderline condition.
- ◆ 80% of American women report being dissatisfied with their appearance.
- ◆ Over 40 billion dollars are spent on dieting and diet-related products each year in the United States.

Possible Contributing Factors

- ◆ A variety of psychological issues and/or problems including low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, anger, loneliness and feelings of inadequacy or loss of control over one's life
- ◆ Inability or difficulty expressing emotions
- ◆ Troubled relationships
- ◆ Being persistently teased or ridiculed because of bodily characteristics
- ◆ Cultural emphasis on thinness and physical appearances

Anorexia Nervosa

- ◆ Characteristics: Self-starvation and extreme weight loss.
- ◆ Symptoms: Refusal to maintain normal body weight, intense fear of weight gain, perception that one is overweight despite significant weight loss, discontinued menstrual periods, and obsession with weight and body image.
- ◆ Health Risks: Slow heart rate, low blood pressure, osteoporosis, dehydration (which can lead to kidney failure if it becomes extremely severe), fatigue, weakness, hair loss, and muscle loss.

Bulimia Nervosa

- ◆ Characteristics: Continuous cycle of bingeing and purging.
- ◆ Symptoms: Consumption of large quantities of food while disregarding feelings of fullness, feeling a loss of control when eating, followed by self-induced vomiting, fasting, abuse of laxatives, and/or excessive exercising to compensate for the calories ingested during the bingeing episode, and obsession with weight and body image
- ◆ Health risks: Dehydration, loss of potassium and sodium, electrolyte imbalances, irregular heartbeat, possible heart failure, inflammation of esophagus, possible gastric rupture, tooth decay and staining, chronic irregular bowel movements and constipation, peptic ulcers, and pancreatitis.

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